

# Invitation to Quote

**Invitation to Quote (ITQ) on behalf of Research England (UKRI)**  
**Subject: The Responsible use of Technology-Assisted Research  
Assessment**  
**Sourcing Reference Number: PS21219**

**UK Shared Business Services Ltd (UK SBS)**  
[www.uksbs.co.uk](http://www.uksbs.co.uk)

Registered in England and Wales as a limited company. Company Number 6330639.  
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VAT registration GB618 3673 25  
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Version 8.0

**UKSBS**  
*Shared Business Services*

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# Section 1 – About UK Shared Business Services

## Putting the business into shared services

UK Shared Business Services Ltd (UK SBS) brings a commercial attitude to the public sector; helping our Contracting Authorities improve efficiency, generate savings and modernise.

It is our vision to become the leading service provider for the Contracting Authorities of shared business services in the UK public sector, continuously reducing cost and improving quality of business services for Government and the public sector.

Our broad range of expert services is shared by our Contracting Authorities. This allows Contracting Authorities the freedom to focus resources on core activities; innovating and transforming their own organisations.

Core services include Procurement, Finance, Grants Admissions, Human Resources, Payroll, ISS, and Property Asset Management all underpinned by our Service Delivery and Contact Centre teams.

UK SBS is a people rather than task focused business. It's what makes us different to the traditional transactional shared services centre. What is more, being a not-for-profit organisation owned by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), UK SBS' goals are aligned with the public sector and delivering best value for the UK taxpayer.

UK Shared Business Services Ltd changed its name from RCUK Shared Services Centre Ltd in March 2013.

## Our Customers

Growing from a foundation of supporting the Research Councils, 2012/13 saw Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) transition their procurement to UK SBS and Crown Commercial Services (CCS – previously Government Procurement Service) agree a Memorandum of Understanding with UK SBS to deliver two major procurement categories (construction and research) across Government.

UK SBS currently manages £700m expenditure for its Contracting Authorities. Our Contracting Authorities who have access to our services and Contracts are detailed [here](#).

## **Privacy Statement**

At UK Shared Business Services (UK SBS) we recognise and understand that your privacy is extremely important, and we want you to know exactly what kind of information we collect about you and how we use it.

This privacy notice link below details what you can expect from UK SBS when we collect your personal information.

- We will keep your data safe and private.
- We will not sell your data to anyone.

- We will only share your data with those you give us permission to share with and only for legitimate service delivery reasons.

<https://www.ukpbs.co.uk/use/pages/privacy.aspx>

For details on how the Contracting Authority protect and process your personal data please follow the link below:

<https://www.ukri.org/privacy-notice/>

## Section 2 – About the Contracting Authority

### UK Research and Innovation

Operating across the whole of the UK and with a combined budget of more than £6 billion, UK Research and Innovation represents the largest reform of the research and innovation funding landscape in the last 50 years.

As an independent non-departmental public body UK Research and Innovation brings together the seven Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, STFC) plus Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England.

UK Research and Innovation ensures the UK maintains its world-leading position in research and innovation. This is done by creating the best environment for research and innovation to flourish.

For more information, please visit: [www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

### Research England

Research England is a council within UK Research and Innovation, operating from April 2018. As a key component of the research funding system, Research England will oversee UK Research and Innovation's England-only functions in relation to university research and knowledge exchange.

This includes providing grant funding to English universities for research and knowledge exchange activities; developing and implementing the Research Excellence Framework in partnership with the UK Higher Education funding bodies; overseeing the sustainability of the Higher Education research base in England; overseeing the £900 million UK Research Partnership Investment Fund; and the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF).

<https://re.ukri.org>

## Section 3 - Working with the Contracting Authority.

In this section you will find details of your Procurement contact point and the timescales relating to this opportunity.

Section 3 – Contact details		
3.1.	Contracting Authority Name and address	Research England (UKRI)
3.2.	Buyer name	Joe Wightman
3.3.	Buyer contact details	<a href="mailto:professionalservices@uksbs.co.uk">professionalservices@uksbs.co.uk</a>
3.4.	Estimated value of the Opportunity	£150,000.00 excluding VAT
3.5.	Process for the submission of clarifications and Bids	<b>All correspondence shall be submitted within the Messaging Centre of the e-sourcing. Guidance Notes to support the use of Delta eSourcing is available <a href="#">here</a>. Please note submission of a Bid to any email address including the Buyer <u>will</u> result in the Bid <u>not</u> being considered.</b>

Section 3 - Timescales		
3.6.	Date of Issue of Contract Advert on Contracts Finder	Friday, 12 November 2021 Contracts Finder
3.7.	Latest date / time ITQ clarification questions shall be received through Delta eSourcing messaging system	Friday, 26 November 2021 11:00
3.8.	Latest date / time ITQ clarification answers should be sent to all Bidders by the Buyer through Delta eSourcing Portal	Tuesday, 30 November 2021 11:00
3.9.	Latest date and time ITQ Bid shall be submitted through Delta eSourcing	Friday, 03 December 2021 11:00
3.10.	Date/time Bidders should be available if face to face clarifications are required	N/a
3.11.	Anticipated notification date of successful and unsuccessful Bids	Friday, 17 December 2021 11:00
3.12.	Anticipated Contract Award date	Friday, 17 December 2021
3.13.	Anticipated Contract Start date	Monday, 03 January 2022
3.14.	Anticipated Contract End date	Friday, 29 July 2022
3.15.	Bid Validity Period	60 Days

## Section 4 – Specification

### 1. Background

The Future Research Assessment Programme has been initiated at the request of UK and devolved government ministers and funding bodies. This significant piece of work will be led by the four UK higher education funding bodies (Research England, Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Department for the Economy, NI) and aims to explore possible approaches to the assessment of UK higher education research performance.

One strand of work will look at the responsible uses of technology-assisted approaches such as artificial-intelligence, machine-learning or metric-driven approaches in research assessment. This will enable the project to investigate possible different approaches to the evaluation of UK higher education research performance, which can encourage and strengthen the emphasis on delivering excellent research and impact, support a positive research culture, while simplifying and reducing the administrative burden on the HE sector.

To meet this requirement the project shall involve a comprehensive literature review of technology assisted approaches to research assessment, will utilise scores produced from the REF2021 exercise to test experimental approaches, and verify the feasibility of using such approaches responsibly in future research assessment exercises while maintaining the principles of fairness, equality and transparency.

#### Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP)

The piece of work detailed here forms part of the Future Research Assessment Programme, initiated at the request of UK and devolved government ministers and led by the four UK higher education funding bodies and aims to explore possible approaches to the assessment of UK higher education research performance.

Through dialogue with the higher education sector, the programme seeks to understand what a healthy, thriving research system looks like and how an assessment model can best form its foundation. The work strands include evaluation of the current Research Excellence Framework, understanding international research assessment practice, as well as investigating possible evaluation models and approaches, looking to identify those that can encourage and strengthen the emphasis on delivering excellent research and impact, and support a positive research culture, while simplifying and reducing the administrative burden on the HE sector.

#### Research Excellence Framework

The REF is the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. The REF was first carried out in 2014, replacing the previous Research Assessment Exercise. The REF is undertaken by the four UK higher education funding bodies: [Research England](#), the [Scottish Funding Council](#) (SFC), the [Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#) (HEFCW), and the [Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland](#) (DfE).

The funding bodies' shared policy aim for research assessment is to secure the continuation of a world-class, dynamic and responsive research base across the full academic spectrum within UK higher education. They expect that this will be achieved through the threefold purpose of the REF:

- To provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment.
- To provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the HE sector and for public information.
- To inform the selective allocation of funding for research.

The REF is a [process of expert review](#), carried out by expert panels for each of the 34 subject-based [units of assessment](#) (UOAs), under the guidance of four main panels. Expert panels are made up of senior academics, international members, and [research users](#).

For each submission, three distinct elements are assessed: the quality of outputs (e.g. publications, performances, and exhibitions), their impact beyond academia, and the environment that supports research.

The submissions for REF 2021 closed on 31 March 2021. Results are expected to be published in late Spring 2022.

#### REF outcomes

In the REF, institutions make submissions to units of assessment and quality profiles are produced for each submission. Outputs, impact case studies and environment templates receive individual scores, which are deleted once the overall quality profile has been agreed. The quality profile will show the proportions of research activity judged to meet each of four starred quality levels, in steps of one per cent. Details of how quality profiles are formulated and presented can be found in Annex B of the [Guidance on Submissions](#). Alongside the quality profile, the funding bodies will publish: the output, impact and environment sub-profiles that were combined to produce the overall quality profile for each submission; the FTE number of staff included in each submission (Category A submitted staff); and the proportion of the eligible staff included as Category A submitted staff in the submission. Quality profiles from REF 2014 can be found here: [https://results.ref.ac.uk/\(S\(4dcm3m4hgrtikthcl4gwljpr\)\)/Results/](https://results.ref.ac.uk/(S(4dcm3m4hgrtikthcl4gwljpr))/Results/).

The proposed research project will seek to understand the feasibility of utilising technology to support research assessment in a responsible way. It will evaluate possible applications of technology in the REF and possible future research assessment exercises.

#### Metric tide

In April 2014 The Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management was set up to investigate the current and potential future roles that quantitative indicators can play in the assessment and management of research. Its

report, 'The Metric Tide', was published in July 2015. Invariably most algorithms developed in the experimental work will utilise metrics, it is therefore critical that this project shall look to build on The Metric Tide and ensure any quantitative indicators are used responsibly. As stated in The Metric Tide responsible metrics can be understood in terms of the following dimensions:

- Robustness: basing metrics on the best possible data in terms of accuracy and scope
- Humility: recognising that quantitative evaluation should support – but not supplant – qualitative, expert assessment
- Transparency: keeping data collection and analytical processes open and transparent, so that those being evaluated can test and verify the results
- Diversity: accounting for variation by field, and using a range of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research and researcher career paths across the system
- Reflexivity: recognising and anticipating the systemic and potential effects of indicators, and updating them in response.

## **2. Aims and Objectives of the Project**

The primary aim of this piece of work is to review applicable approaches to technology-assisted research assessment and to understand the feasibility of utilising such approaches in supporting the REF and possible future research assessment exercises. Any future research assessment system will continue to adhere to the principles of fairness, equality and transparency, as well as being careful to guard the robustness and integrity of the exercise. Therefore, a key issue will be understanding the risk of possible biases (e.g. relating to protected characteristics or disciplinary differences) in technology-assisted approaches to assessment.

### ***0.1 Literature review***

This work is envisioned to include a review of the current literature on technology-assisted approaches to research assessment (for example use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, metric-driven assessment, etc.). This should cover any approaches used internationally for research and any relevant uses of such approaches in similar assessment processes, such as peer review in publishing.

The use of technology to assist in research assessment could be considered at a range of levels and stages of the assessment. These could include (but would not be limited to): allocation of research outputs for assessment by appropriate reviewers; providing interim or suggested scores for reviewers to use as a guide; identification of clear-cut output scores (i.e. 4\* with 95% confidence) allowing peer review to focus scrutiny on borderline outputs; scoring outputs without peer review, or with a reduced amount of peer review sampling to confirm the technology assisted scoring. Clearly there will be different challenges and issues with these different applications of technology and we would wish to understand what those challenges might be, along with the feasibility and desirability of applying such approaches in these different scenarios.

As any future assessment exercise will continue to adhere to the principles of fairness, equality and transparency, this element of the work will also seek to understand how these elements can be measured and how reassurance can be provided that these principles are being upheld. For example it may seek to understand possible biases due to the diversity of researchers, and also biases due to subject or discipline of research. The literature review should also seek to understand the necessary sample size for reliable and robust assessment; for example whether assessment could seek to examine research across the full-range of the assessment (with the biases implied between subject areas), or at a more granular level (with reduced reliability due to a reduced sample size).

The main aims of the literature review are to understand:

- a. The responsible use of technology to assist in research assessment;
- b. The bias and possible implications for underrepresented groups
- c. How to assess and understand the fairness of any potential technologies
- d. Which inputs and indicators would prove suitable in any potential technology?
- e. If public datasets can be utilised to improve technology assisted research assessment

### ***0.2 Experimental work***

The project should also include experimental work utilising emerging REF scores from the 2021 exercise to evaluate the possibility of using technology such as AI or ML or other metric-based approaches to support assessment (as suggested in some of the possible applications above). This data will include the indicative individual scores for outputs taken at an advanced stage of the exercise, (i.e. where the assessment is almost complete). The data is yet to be finalised, but it is anticipated that it will comprise of individual scores from a number of sub-panels across the four main panel groups, e.g. scores from 2 or 3 sub-panels in each main panel group where the assessment is most progressed. Applicants are encouraged to propose other data sets and assessment approaches which could be used alongside the individual REF scores such as bibliometric data and text-mining of the individual outputs.

The main aims of the experimental work are to understand:

- a. Cost implications for the use of such approaches, bearing in mind an anticipated reduction in the burden of peer review assessment;
- b. Robustness of the approaches, including applicability at different levels of granularity.
- c. Fairness and inclusiveness of the approach at different levels of granularity

We would expect the project to report their findings of the use of technology to support assessment in future research assessment exercises. These may indicate that one or more of the suggested approaches would be a workable approach to streamlining and increasing the efficiency of the assessment, and this may be more applicable in some subject areas than others. However, the outcome may well suggest that more in-depth study is necessary before such measures could be used robustly in research assessment and that further experiments or pilot studies could be conducted in future exercises. Any

refinements to future exercises as a result of this work would need to be subject to consultation with the sector.

### ***0.3 Sector Engagement***

Key to the feasibility of utilising technology such as AI and ML or other metric-based approaches to support research assessment will be the perceptions of the sector. It will be important to test the findings of the project with the academic community, e.g. through focus groups and/or a conference to disseminate the project findings.

The findings of this project will be compiled into a final report that shall be reviewed and signed off by the FRAP board. The board will not be obliged to act on all the findings that have been made in the report and shall instead use it to inform their understanding of how technology can be used in future research assessment exercises. The report shall inform the recommendations made by the FRAP board to their respective councils regarding the use of technology to assist in any future research assessment exercise, however, further work may be required to understand the feasibility of such tools, to deem if it could be used effectively to ensure a robust and fair process that reduces burden on the sector.

### **3. Suggested Methodology**

The primary output will be a written report to Research England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Scottish Funding Council and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland. This report should contain a comprehensive review of the literature relating to use of technology to assist assessment of research. It should cover any approaches used internationally or use of such approaches in similar assessment processes, such as peer review in publishing. The report should discuss and evaluate different approaches and therefore inform the experimental work to be conducted within the assessment phase of the project. The review should also report on the perceptions within the academic community of the use of technology such as AI or ML to support research assessment, including the findings of the project.

We would expect experimental work to run along the lines of using a sample of individual REF scores generated by peer review to inform the development of an automated/semi-automated system of assessment which could then be tested against a separate sample also scored by peer review. Such experimental work could help us to understand the reliability of technology assisted assessment, the scope, and the level at which such assessment could be applied; for example, automated assessment may be more reliable in some main panel areas than in others. The experimental work would therefore likely spread across the main panels and would focus on a number of different UoAs.

The project should propose and examine appropriate methodologies for the experimental work; which will help the FRAP board answer key questions such as:

- In which subject areas and/or units of assessment will automated/semi-automated assessment be appropriate
- what are the potential biases that will be caused by technology assisted assessment?
- how can technology assisted assessment be used alongside peer review to reduce bureaucracy?
- what level(s) of granularity could be investigated
- what indicators can be used to provide a measure of the fairness of any potential system
- can technology assisted assessment help in the assessment of interdisciplinary research
- how many different subject areas could be compared
- what methodologies could be used (e.g. dimensionality reduction on an array of input metrics, neural networks for the classification of submissions).

Because of the need to utilise scores for individual outputs, experimental work would need to be conducted in the “window of opportunity” when the assessment is complete (or more-or-less complete) and before the results are published and the individual scores are deleted. Individual scores are set to be published on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022; it is therefore critical that any experimental work utilising individual scores is complete by this date.

Sector engagement should include a number of focus groups capturing the views across a diverse range of stakeholders; this should include the full breadth of academic disciplines represented in the REF, and should also seek to capture the views of those with protected characteristics. In addition the project should consider a final conference to disseminate the findings of the project.

The study will be supported and informed by the expertise and guidance of an independent steering group which will convene and be consulted at key stages of the project’s delivery. The devolved funding bodies will support recruitment of steering group members. Research England will provide scheduling and secretariat support for steering group meetings. The successful contractor should input into the structure and focus of steering group meetings.

#### **4. Deliverables**

The successful bidder will be expected to deliver the following:

- Statement of work at commencement of the project outlining the work activities they will undertake, deliverables and timetable. This will be discussed and refined at the inception meeting which will be held virtually the week the contract is awarded. It is a requirement that project work must begin within a week of the contract being awarded in January 2022. The overall project timeline will run until July 2022.
- Project plan complete with milestones and risk assessment, including levels of risk with owners identified and mitigating actions to address;

- Attendance and contribution at a minimum of three steering group meetings (venue TBC). Contribution to include input into meeting agendas, presenting project updates and findings to group, facilitating discussion and capturing feedback;
- Draft report of the literature review for review by the steering group.
- Any methodology (such as an AI algorithm) and any other research tools and outcomes from the experimental work.
- Full draft report for review and sign off by the funding bodies;
- Final report for review and sign off by the funding bodies. The report will be published as part of a wider suite of REF 2021 evaluation studies.

The successful contractor will be expected to be in regular communication with the Research England project managers (via email, telephone and face to face meetings as required) to ensure that objectives and milestones are being met and that the project is progressing in scope and on time. The successful contractors should ensure that any potential issues or risks are identified, monitored and managed appropriately by maintaining an updated risk register.

### **Timetable**

January 2022	Project begins with a statement of work being delivered
March 2022	Steering group 1
April 2022	Literature review draft report
April 2022	Steering group 2
May 2022	Experimental work reported on
June 2022	Steering group 3
July 2022 (completion date is fundamental to the success of the project)	Final report published

### **Terms and Conditions**

Bidders are to note that any requested modifications to the Contracting Authority Terms and Conditions on the grounds of statutory and legal matters only, shall be raised as a formal clarification during the permitted clarification period.

## Section 5 – Evaluation model

The evaluation model below shall be used for this ITQ, which will be determined to two decimal places.

Where a question is 'for information only' it will not be scored.

The evaluation team may comprise staff from UK SBS and the Contracting Authority and any specific external stakeholders the Contracting Authority deems required.

The evaluation and if required team may comprise staff from UK SBS and the Contracting Authority and any specific external stakeholders the Contracting Authority deems required. After evaluation and if required moderation scores will be finalised by performing a calculation to identify (at question level) the mean average of all evaluators (Example – a question is scored by three evaluators and judged as scoring 5, 5 and 6. These scores will be added together and divided by the number of evaluators to produce the final score of 5.33 ( $5+5+6 = 16 \div 3 = 5.33$ ))

Pass / Fail criteria		
Questionnaire	Q No.	Question subject
Commercial	SEL1.2	Employment breaches/ Equality
Commercial	SEL2.12	General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Act and the Data Protection Act 2018
Commercial	FOI1.1	Freedom of Information
Commercial	AW1.1	Form of Bid
Commercial	AW1.3	Certificate of Bona Fide Bid
Commercial	AW3.1	Validation check
Commercial	AW4.1	Compliance to the Contract Terms
Commercial	AW4.2	Changes to the Contract Terms
Price	AW5.1	Firm and Fixed Price
Quality	AW6.1	Compliance to the Specification
Quality	AW6.2	Variable Bids
		In the event of a Bidder failing to meet the requirements of a Mandatory pass / fail criteria, the Contracting Authority reserves the right to disqualify the Bidder and not consider evaluation of any of the Award stage scoring methodology or Mandatory pass / fail criteria.

Scoring criteria			
<b>Evaluation Justification Statement</b>			
In consideration of this particular requirement the Contracting Authority has decided to evaluate Potential Providers by adopting the weightings/scoring mechanism detailed within this ITQ. The Contracting Authority considers these weightings to be in line with existing best practice for a requirement of this type.			
Questionnaire	Q No.	Question subject	Maximum Marks
Price	AW5.2	Price	20%
Quality	PROJ1.1	Approach / Methodology	30%

Quality	PROJ1.2	Staff to Deliver / Skills & Expertise	20%
Quality	PROJ1.3	Understanding the Project Environment	10%
Quality	PROJ1.4	Project Plan and Timescales	10%
Quality	PROJ1.5	Risk Management	10%

## Evaluation of criteria

### Non-Price elements

Each question will be judged on a score from 0 to 100, which shall be subjected to a multiplier to reflect the percentage of the evaluation criteria allocated to that question.

Where an evaluation criterion is worth 20% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 20%.

Example if a Bidder scores 60 from the available 100 points this will equate to 12% by using the following calculation:

$$\text{Score} = \{\text{weighting percentage}\} \times \{\text{bidder's score}\} = 20\% \times 60 = 12$$

The same logic will be applied to groups of questions which equate to a single evaluation criterion. The 0-100 score shall be based on (unless otherwise stated within the question):

0	The Question is not answered, or the response is completely unacceptable.
10	Extremely poor response – they have completely missed the point of the question.
20	Very poor response and not wholly acceptable. Requires major revision to the response to make it acceptable. Only partially answers the requirement, with major deficiencies and little relevant detail proposed.
40	Poor response only partially satisfying the question requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations. Low probability of being a capable supplier.
60	Response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded upon. Response is sufficient but does not inspire.
80	Good response which describes their capabilities in detail which provides high levels of assurance consistent with a quality provider. The response includes a full description of techniques and measurements currently employed.
100	Response is exceptional and clearly demonstrates they are capable of meeting the requirement. No significant weaknesses noted. The response is compelling in its description of techniques and measurements currently employed, providing full assurance consistent with a quality provider.

All questions will be scored based on the above mechanism. Please be aware that there may be multiple evaluators. If so, their individual scores will be averaged (mean) to determine your final score as follows:

### Example

Evaluator 1 scored your bid as 60

Evaluator 2 scored your bid as 60

Evaluator 3 scored your bid as 40

Evaluator 4 scored your bid as 40

Your final score will  $(60+60+40+40) \div 4 = 50$

Once the above evaluation process has been undertaken and the scores are apportioned by evaluator(s) this will then be subject to an independent commercial review and moderation meeting, if required by the commercial lead, any and all changes will be formally recorded relative to the regulatory obligations associated with this procurement, so as to ensure that the procurement has been undertaken in a robust and transparent way.

**Price elements** will be judged on the following criteria.

The lowest price for a response which meets the pass criteria shall score 100. All other bids shall be scored on a pro rata basis in relation to the lowest price. The score is then subject to a multiplier to reflect the percentage value of the price criterion.

For example - Bid 1 £100,000 scores 100.

Bid 2 £120,000 differential of £20,000 or 20% remove 20% from price scores 80

Bid 3 £150,000 differential £50,000 remove 50% from price scores 50.

Bid 4 £175,000 differential £75,000 remove 75% from price scores 25.

Bid 5 £200,000 differential £100,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.

Bid 6 £300,000 differential £200,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.

Where the scoring criterion is worth 50% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 50.

In the example if a supplier scores 80 from the available 100 points this will equate to 40% by using the following calculation: Score/Total Points multiplied by 50 ( $80/100 \times 50 = 40$ )

The lowest score possible is 0 even if the price submitted is more than 100% greater than the lowest price.

This evaluation criteria will therefore not be subject to any averaging, as this is a mathematical scoring criteria, but will still be subject to a commercial review.

## Evaluation process

The evaluation process will feature some, if not all, the following phases.

Stage	Summary of activity
Receipt and Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ITQ logged upon opening in alignment with UK SBS's procurement procedures.</li><li>Any ITQ Bid received after the closing date will be rejected unless circumstances attributed to the Contracting Authority or the e-sourcing tool beyond the bidder control are responsible for late submission.</li></ul>
Compliance check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Check all Mandatory requirements are acceptable to the Contracting Authority.</li><li>Unacceptable Bids maybe subject to clarification by the Contracting Authority or rejection of the Bid.</li></ul>
Scoring of the Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Evaluation team will independently score the Bid and provide a commentary of their scoring justification against the criteria.</li></ul>
Clarifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Evaluation team may require written clarification to Bids</li></ul>
Re - scoring of the Bid and Clarifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Following Clarification responses, the Evaluation team reserve the right to independently re-score the Bid and Clarifications and provide a commentary of their re-scoring justification against the Evaluation criteria.</li></ul>
Moderation meeting (if required to reach an award decision)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To review the outcomes of the Commercial review</li><li>To agree final scoring for each Bid, relative rankings of the Bids</li></ul>

Due diligence of the Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Contracting Authority may request the following requirements at any stage of the Procurement.</li> <li>• Submission of insurance documents from the Bidder</li> <li>• Request for evidence of documents / accreditations referenced in the / Invitation to Quote response / Bid and / or Clarifications from the Bidder</li> <li>• Taking up of Bidder references from the Bidders Customers.</li> <li>• Financial Credit check for the Bidder</li> </ul>
Validation of unsuccessful Bidders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm contents of the letters to provide details of scoring and meaningful feedback on the unsuccessful Bidders Bid in comparison with the successful Bidders Bid.</li> </ul>

## **Section 6 – Evaluation questionnaire**

Bidders should note that the evaluation questionnaire is located within the **e-sourcing questionnaire**.

Guidance on how to register and use the e-sourcing portal is available at <http://www.ukpbs.co.uk/services/procure/Pages/supplier.aspx>

**PLEASE NOTE THE QUESTIONS ARE NOT NUMBERED SEQUENTIALLY**

## Section 7 – General Information

### What makes a good bid – some simple do's 😊

#### DO:

- 7.1 Do comply with Procurement document instructions. Failure to do so may lead to disqualification.
- 7.2 Do provide the Bid on time, and in the required format. Remember that the date/time given for a response is the last date that it can be accepted; we are legally bound to disqualify late submissions. Responses received after the date indicated in the ITQ shall not be considered by the Contracting Authority, unless the Bidder can justify that the reason for the delay, is solely attributable to the Contracting Authority
- 7.3 Do ensure you have read all the training materials to utilise e-sourcing tool prior to responding to this Bid. If you send your Bid by email or post it will be rejected.
- 7.4 Do use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint Excel 97-03 or compatible formats, or PDF unless agreed in writing by the Buyer. If you use another file format without our written permission, we may reject your Bid.
- 7.5 Do ensure you utilise the Delta eSourcing messaging system to raise any clarifications to our ITQ. You should note that we will release the answer to the question to all Bidders and where we suspect the question contains confidential information, we may modify the content of the question to protect the anonymity of the Bidder or their proposed solution
- 7.6 Do answer the question, it is not enough simply to cross-reference to a 'policy', web page or another part of your Bid, the evaluation team have limited time to assess bids and if they can't find the answer, they can't score it.
- 7.7 Do consider who the Contracting Authority is and what they want – a generic answer does not necessarily meet every Contracting Authority's needs.
- 7.8 Do reference your documents correctly, specifically where supporting documentation is requested e.g. referencing the question/s they apply to.
- 7.9 Do provide clear, concise and ideally generic contact details; telephone numbers, e-mails and fax details.
- 7.10 Do complete all questions in the questionnaire or we may reject your Bid.
- 7.11 Do ensure that the Response and any documents accompanying it are in the English Language, the Contracting Authority reserve the right to disqualify any full or part responses that are not in English.
- 7.12 Do check and recheck your Bid before dispatch.

## What makes a good bid – some simple do not's

### DO NOT

- 7.13 Do not cut and paste from a previous document and forget to change the previous details such as the previous buyer's name.
- 7.14 Do not attach 'glossy' brochures that have not been requested, they will not be read unless we have asked for them. Only send what has been requested and only send supplementary information if we have offered the opportunity so to do.
- 7.15 Do not share the Procurement documents, they are confidential and should not be shared with anyone without the Buyers written permission.
- 7.16 Do not seek to influence the procurement process by requesting meetings or contacting UK SBS or the Contracting Authority to discuss your Bid. If your Bid requires clarification the Buyer will contact you. All information secured outside of formal Buyer communications shall have no Legal standing or worth and should not be relied upon.
- 7.17 Do not contact any UK SBS staff or the Contracting Authority staff without the Buyers written permission or we may reject your Bid.
- 7.18 Do not collude to fix or adjust the price or withdraw your Bid with another Party as we will reject your Bid.
- 7.19 Do not offer UK SBS or the Contracting Authority staff any inducement or we will reject your Bid.
- 7.20 Do not seek changes to the Bid after responses have been submitted and the deadline for Bids to be submitted has passed.
- 7.21 Do not cross reference answers to external websites or other parts of your Bid, the cross references and website links will not be considered.
- 7.22 Do not exceed word counts, the additional words will not be considered.
- 7.23 Do not make your Bid conditional on acceptance of your own Terms of Contract, as your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.24 Do not unless explicitly requested by the Contracting Authority either in the procurement documents or via a formal clarification from the Contracting Authority send your response by any way other than via e-sourcing tool. Responses received by any other method than requested will not be considered for the opportunity.

## Some additional guidance notes

- 7.25 All enquiries with respect to access to the e-sourcing tool and problems with functionality within the tool must be submitted to Delta eSourcing, Telephone 0845 270 7050
- 7.26 Bidders will be specifically advised where attachments are permissible to support a question response within the e-sourcing tool. Where they are not permissible any attachments submitted will not be considered as part of the evaluation process.
- 7.27 Question numbering is not sequential and all questions which require submission are included in the Section 6 Evaluation Questionnaire.
- 7.28 Any Contract offered may not guarantee any volume of work or any exclusivity of supply.
- 7.29 We do not guarantee to award any Contract as a result of this procurement
- 7.30 All documents issued or received in relation to this procurement shall be the property of the Contracting Authority / UKSBS.
- 7.31 We can amend any part of the procurement documents at any time prior to the latest date / time Bids shall be submitted through the Delta eSourcing Portal.
- 7.32 If you are a Consortium you must provide details of the Consortiums structure.
- 7.33 Bidders will be expected to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.34 Bidders should note the Government's transparency agenda requires your Bid and any Contract entered into to be published on a designated, publicly searchable web site. By submitting a response to this ITQ Bidders are agreeing that their Bid and Contract may be made public
- 7.35 Your bid will be valid for 60 days or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.36 Bidders may only amend the contract terms during the clarification period only, only if you can demonstrate there is a legal or statutory reason why you cannot accept them. If you request changes to the Contract terms without such grounds and the Contracting Authority fail to accept your legal or statutory reason is reasonably justified, we may reject your Bid.
- 7.37 We will let you know the outcome of your Bid evaluation and where requested will provide a written debrief of the relative strengths and weaknesses of your Bid.
- 7.38 If you fail mandatory pass / fail criteria we will reject your Bid.
- 7.39 Bidders are required to use IE8, IE9, Chrome or Firefox in order to access the functionality of the Delta eSourcing Portal.
- 7.40 Bidders should note that if they are successful with their proposal the Contracting Authority reserves the right to ask additional compliancy checks prior to the award of

any Contract. In the event of a Bidder failing to meet one of the compliancy checks the Contracting Authority may decline to proceed with the award of the Contract to the successful Bidder.

- 7.41 All timescales are set using a 24-hour clock and are based on British Summer Time or Greenwich Mean Time, depending on which applies at the point when Date and Time Bids shall be submitted through the Delta eSourcing Portal.
- 7.42 All Central Government Departments and their Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further, the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement - including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice.

For these purposes, the Contracting Authority may disclose within Government any of the Bidders documentation/information (including any that the Bidder considers to be confidential and/or commercially sensitive such as specific bid information) submitted by the Bidder to the Contracting Authority during this Procurement. The information will not be disclosed outside Government. Bidders taking part in this ITQ consent to these terms as part of the competition process.

- 7.43 The Government introduced its new Government Security Classifications (GSC) classification scheme on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 to replace the current Government Protective Marking System (GPMS). A key aspect of this is the reduction in the number of security classifications used. All Bidders are encouraged to make themselves aware of the changes and identify any potential impacts in their Bid, as the protective marking and applicable protection of any material passed to, or generated by, you during the procurement process or pursuant to any Contract awarded to you as a result of this tender process will be subject to the new GSC. The link below to the Gov.uk website provides information on the new GSC:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-security-classifications>

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to amend any security related term or condition of the draft contract accompanying this ITQ to reflect any changes introduced by the GSC. In particular where this ITQ is accompanied by any instructions on safeguarding classified information (e.g. a Security Aspects Letter) as a result of any changes stemming from the new GSC, whether in respect of the applicable protective marking scheme, specific protective markings given, the aspects to which any protective marking applies or otherwise. This may relate to the instructions on safeguarding classified information (e.g. a Security Aspects Letter) as they apply to the procurement as they apply to the procurement process and/or any contracts awarded to you as a result of the procurement process.

## **USEFUL INFORMATION LINKS**

- [Contracts Finder](#)
- [Equalities Act introduction](#)
- [Bribery Act introduction](#)
- [Freedom of information Act](#)

## **8.0 Freedom of information**

8.4.1 In accordance with the obligations and duties placed upon public authorities by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'FoIA') and the Environmental Information

Regulations 2004 (the 'EIR') (each as amended from time to time), UK SBS or the Contracting Authority may be required to disclose information submitted by the Bidder to the to the Contracting Authority.

8.4.2 In respect of any information submitted by a Bidder that it considers to be commercially sensitive the Bidder should complete the Freedom of Information declaration question defined in the Question FOI1.2.

8.4.3 Where a Bidder identifies information as commercially sensitive, the Contracting Authority will endeavour to maintain confidentiality. Bidders should note, however, that, even where information is identified as commercially sensitive, the Contracting Authority may be required to disclose such information in accordance with the FoIA or the Environmental Information Regulations. In particular, the Contracting Authority is required to form an independent judgment concerning whether the information is exempt from disclosure under the FoIA or the EIR and whether the public interest favours disclosure or not. Accordingly, the Contracting Authority cannot guarantee that any information marked 'confidential' or "commercially sensitive" will not be disclosed.

8.4.4 Where a Bidder receives a request for information under the FoIA or the EIR during the procurement, this should be immediately passed on to UK SBS or the Contracting Authority and the Bidder should not attempt to answer the request without first consulting with the Contracting Authority.

8.4.5 Bidders are reminded that the Government's transparency agenda requires that sourcing documents, including ITQ templates such as this, are published on a designated, publicly searchable web site, and, that the same applies to other sourcing documents issued by UK SBS or the Contracting Authority, and any contract entered into by the Contracting Authority with its preferred supplier once the procurement is complete. By submitting a response to this ITQ Bidders are agreeing that their participation and contents of their Response may be made public.

## **8.5. Response Validity**

8.5.1 Your Response should remain open for consideration for a period of 60 days. A Response valid for a shorter period may be rejected.

## **8.6. Timescales**

8.6.1 [Section 3](#) of the ITQ sets out the proposed procurement timetable. the Contracting Authority reserves the right to extend the dates and will advise potential Bidders of any change to the dates.

## **8.7. The Contracting Authority's Contact Details**

8.7.1 Unless stated otherwise in these Instructions or in writing from UK SBS or the Contracting Authority, all communications from Bidders (including their sub-contractors, consortium members, consultants and advisers) during the period of this procurement must be directed through the e-sourcing tool to the designated UK SBS contact.

### **8.7.2**

All enquiries with respect to access to the e-sourcing tool may be submitted to Delta eSourcing on 0845 270 7050 please not this is a free self-registration website and this

can be done by completing the online questionnaire at <https://uksbs.delta-sourcing.com/>

8.7.3 Bidders should be mindful that the designated Contact should not under any circumstances be sent a copy of their Response outside of the e-sourcing tool. Failure to follow this requirement will result in disqualification of the Response.

## Appendix ‘A’ Glossary of Terms

**## GUIDANCE - GLOSSARY**  When adding new definitions always use Capital letters at the start of each word and inverted commas (“”) and the start and end of the definition, for example “Call Off Contract” and ensure the format of the definition is consistent throughout the document. Please also check the existing list of definitions and remove those that are not used. ##

TERM	MEANING
“UK SBS”	means UK Shared Business Services Ltd herein after referred to as UK SBS.
“Bid”, “Response”, “Submitted Bid”, or “ITQ Response”	means the Bidders formal offer in response to this Invitation to Quote
“Bidder(s)”	means the organisations being invited to respond to this Invitation to Quote
“Central Purchasing Body”	means a duly constituted public sector organisation which procures supplies/services/works for and on behalf of contracting authorities
“Conditions of Bid”	means the terms and conditions set out in this ITQ relating to the submission of a Bid
“Contract”	means the agreement to be entered by the Contracting Authority and the Supplier following any award under the procurement
“Contracting Bodies”	means the Contracting Authority and any other contracting authorities described in the <b>Contracts Finder Contract Notice</b>
“Contracting Authority”	A public body regulated under the Public Procurement Regulations on whose behalf the procurement is being run
“Customer”	means the legal entity (or entities) for which any Contract agreed will be made accessible to.
“Due Diligence Information”	means the background and supporting documents and information provided by the Contracting Authority for the purpose of better informing the Bidders responses to this ITQ
"EIR"	mean the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant Government department in relation to such regulations
“FoIA”	means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any subordinate legislation made under such Act from time to time together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant Government department in relation to such legislation
“Invitation to Quote” or “ITQ”	means this Invitation to Quote documentation and all related documents published by the Contracting Authority and made available to Bidders and includes the Due Diligence Information. <b>NOTE:</b> This document is often referred to as an Invitation to Tender within other organisations

<b>“Mandatory”</b>	Means a pass / fail criteria which must be met in order for a Bid to be considered, unless otherwise specified.
<b>“Named Procurement person ”</b>	means the single point of contact for the Contracting Authority based in UK SBS that will be dealing with the procurement
<b>“Order”</b>	means an order for served by any Contracting Body on the Supplier
<b>“Other Public Bodies”</b>	means all Contracting Bodies except the Contracting Authority
<b>“Supplier(s)”</b>	means the organisation(s) awarded the Contract
<b>“Supplies / Services / Works”</b>	means any supplies/services and supplies or works set out at within <u>Section 4 Specification</u>